

The Flyleaf

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Walter Hall

Dickinson, Texas

The race is so close that an honest error in tabulation could easily make the difference. Please check the returns now . . . and ascertain when the committee will meet to canvass the result in your county. You should arrange to have [a] Johnson representative present when the returns are canvassed. . . . Many thanks for your fine work. I am calling on you for what is probably the most important service you can render me. Regards.

Lyndon Johnson



RICE UNIVERSITY FONDREN LIBRARY

Founded under the charter of the university dated May 18, 1891, the library was established in 1913. Its present facility was dedicated November 4, 1949, and rededicated in 1969 after a substantial addition, both made possible by gifts of Ella F. Fondren, her children, and the Fondren Foundation and Trust as a tribute to Walter William Fondren. The library recorded its half-millionth volume in 1965; its one millionth volume was celebrated April 22, 1979.

THE FRIENDS OF FONDREN LIBRARY

The Friends of Fondren Library was founded in 1950 as an association of library supporters interested in increasing and making better known the resources of the Fondren Library at Rice University. The Friends, through members' dues and sponsorship of a memorial and honor gift program, secure gifts and bequests and provide funds for the purchase of rare books, manuscripts, and other material which could not otherwise be acquired by the library.

THE FLY LEAF

Founded October 1950 and published quarterly in March, June, September, and December by The Friends of Fondren Library, Rice University, Houston, Texas 77001, as a record of Fondren Library and Friends activities, and of the generosity of the library's supporters.

Dr. Frank E. Vandiver, Editor; Mrs. Peggy Abadie, Mrs. Diana Poteat Hobby and Mrs. Sally McQueen Smith, Editorial Committee; Ms. Connie M. Ericson, Editorial Assistant.

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COVER: *From a telegram to Walter G. Hall from Lyndon Johnson, Walter G. Hall papers, Woodson Research Center of the Fondren Library. Hall was an active Johnson campaigner in the Gulf Coast area, and his papers are an interesting record of the minutiae campaign organizers must oversee. The telegram refers to Johnson's concern about the accuracy of the count on election returns in his very close, and subsequently contested, democratic primary race against Coke Stevenson. Johnson bested Stevenson by only 87 votes and went on to win the senatorial race. The narrow margin of victory won Johnson the nickname "Landslide Lyndon."*

A L E T T E R T O T H E F R I E N D S

The charter of the Friends outlines a two-fold purpose for our organization—to increase the Fondren’s resources through donations to Friends’ gift programs and to make better known the existing resources of the Fondren Library. Our two goals, however, are not really separate; they complement one another. The more we share with our friends our knowledge of the resources of the Fondren and its services to the university and the larger community, the greater our success is in enlisting financial support for a worthwhile enterprise.

In his address at the Fondren Library’s millionth volume celebration, Daniel J. Boorstin, Librarian of Congress, spoke of the library as a “crossroads of the mind,” a meeting place for all disciplines, a meeting place for the scientist, artist, musician, and historian. All rely on the resources and services a library provides, and all rely on our continuing support.

One way our work can reflect our appreciation of the Fondren’s multi-faceted service is through our programs—lectures, presentations, and events designed to make known the work of those who depend on the Fondren for their research. Our Christmas program with the Shepherd Singers focused on the arts, and so our upcoming program will turn to the sciences. Dr. John Freeman of the Space Physics department will lecture on the accomplishments of and the future of solar power research Rice and NASA are conducting together. Our program later in the spring (April 12) will focus on writers—a fitting conclusion to this year’s series since it will highlight work at Rice in the third of the disciplines featured on Rice’s academic seal—letters.

Our programs, then, fulfill one of our primary responsibilities as Friends—making known the broad range of resources and services of the Fondren, sharing our awareness of the Fondren’s value as a crossroads for the university and the larger community. With your help, however, they can serve an additional purpose—expanding our circle of Friends and thereby increasing our opportunities to aid the Fondren. Every new Friend we enroll increases our potential for supporting the library and the university, and we need your help in enlisting your friends. When you receive invitations to our programs, consider who you can invite as your guests. All are welcome as all in the community are served by the Fondren—an institution located at Rice but answering the needs of the larger community.

I look forward to joining you, and your friends, in working to support the Fondren through our programs. I welcome the opportunity to help make your friends our Friends.

Yours sincerely,

Mrs. Edward A. Blackburn, Jr.
Vice-President, Programs

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CONFESSIONS OF A PAPERPHILIAC; OR, THE PAPER CHASE

Walter L. Buenger

Walter L. Buenger is an assistant professor of history at Texas A&M University who received his Ph.D. from Rice in 1979.

Some people collect stamps or coins; I collect paper—particularly paper with words on it. There are many paperphiliacs in this world—men and women who never throw away a scrap of correspondence or a single document pertaining to their lives. My grandmother, for example, kept every letter she ever received in her ninety years. At the end of each year she would tie her letters up with a red ribbon and file them away in a shoe box. In other shoe boxes were her own extensive commentaries on the Bible. In still others were clippings about her children and grandchildren. When my grandmother died she left us closets of shoe boxes full of paper, a monument to her diligence, frugality, and orderliness. More important, the papers were a testimony to her wit, intelligence, love of family, and deep religious convictions.

I must have inherited paperphilia from my grandmother. Instead of shoe boxes and neatly tied bundles, however, I have file drawers full of paper—and I wouldn't part with a scrap of it. Lately, I have even extended my collecting of paper one step further. I collect other people's papers. With the enthusiasm that others have for collecting and categorizing plants or insects, I collect and categorize the paper remains of human beings. Some people chase butterflies for a hobby. I chase paper.

Actually, I became a paper chaser by accident and necessity. I was assigned the task of working for the Houston Metropolitan Research Center in my poor and starving graduate student days. The Metropolitan Research Center was busily trying to save as much archival material about the Gulf Coast as possible. As part of this project, I was assigned to travel to Galveston to pick up the records of the Santa Fe Railroad from the abandoned train station. Once at the station, I walked the ghost-like halls until I discovered the room where the documents were stored. In one corner, a pile of papers had been burned to warm the hands and heat the soup of vagabonds. Other papers had been used by the building's pigeons for nesting material. The remainder lay scattered across the floor covered with dust and pigeon droppings. As you might imagine, I

was not an instant convert to the collection of other men's papers. At the time I would have preferred to complete the job the tramps began by reducing the papers to ashes. Nevertheless, my colleagues and I boxed up the papers and hauled them back to Rice.

Having saved the records from further destruction, I began to sort them and put them in some sort of rational and usable order. As I read the papers I realized that here was a valuable historical record. Not only were these documents the necessary beginning for a history of the railroad in Texas, but they were the story of the little towns and stations up and down the railroad line. Those papers were the story, or at least part of the story, of many people who ran, used, fought for, and depended on the railroad. It was at that point that my historian's sensibilities and my innate fondness for collecting and preserving documents combined. A paper chaser was born.

My skills as a preserver of old documents were honed by later work at the Woodson Research Center in the Fondren Library. The research center is at the back of the first floor of the Fondren. It has special hours, a security system, a trained archival staff, and a controlled environment. The research center houses rare books, old maps, manuscript collections, special collections of books, and the university's archives. None of this material can circulate outside of the research center, and it can be used only in supervised work areas. One strength of the research center is its staff. Both Nancy Parker, who heads up the center, and her chief assistant, Lauren Brown, are extremely friendly and helpful. Their talents as administrators and archivists helped make my work on manuscript collections enjoyable instead of onerous.

While working at the center, I compiled guides to several manuscript collections. One of these collections was the papers of W. B. and Estelle Sharp. The collection, while relatively modest in size—only six linear feet of boxes full of documents—contained many interesting photographs and newspaper clippings as well as letters from the pioneer oilman to his wife. Working on the Sharp papers whetted my appetite for things to come, and I wished the university success in acquiring other collections. I completed the Sharp project in July 1978. I did not have long to wait before beginning another project.

Manuscript collections often come to rest in



Walter Buenger with one of the files from the Walter G. Hall papers

libraries or archives in a circuitous fashion. Such was the case with the Walter Gardner Hall papers. Several years ago Professor Chandler Davidson of the sociology department at Rice got to know Walter Hall, a prominent Galveston County banker and political activist. Hall had long been a leader of the liberal Democrats in Texas, and Davidson, who was interested in Texas politics, was drawn to this rare combination of financier and liberal. Davidson persistently tried to convince Hall, a 1928 Rice graduate and a generous friend of the library and the university, to give his old letters, newspapers, and campaign material dating back to the 1940s to Rice. Davidson also worked to set up a series of interviews with Hall. With the help of some of his colleagues in the history department, he secured the donation in the fall of 1978. It is ironic that Davidson, a sociologist, acquired for Rice a collection which promises to be of greatest value to historians. True paper chasers, however, ignore divisional lines.

The generosity of Walter Hall and an anonymous donor provided, in addition, a grant to process the Hall papers. Processing a collection of over twenty-five shelf feet takes a considerable amount of

money—funds for the salaries of the people who sort the thousands of documents and arrange them into some usable system, for the acid-free folders and boxes that protect the documents, for typing and secretarial help, for travel, and for the interviews. Altogether, we estimated that it would take at least 1,000 manhours to put the collection in its most usable form.

In December 1978, Nancy Parker and I went down to Dickinson to haul the papers back to Rice. It was at that time that I first met Walter Hall. He exuded optimism and energy and from the first displayed a fondness for humorous anecdotes. He was as willing to laugh at himself and his own political failures as he was to laugh at the foibles of others. Meeting Hall convinced me that processing the collection would be an entertaining project, as well as a way to pay the rent while I finished writing my dissertation. Once Mr. Hall actually showed us his papers, I was even more convinced that this would be a worthwhile project in every way.

I had been told the size of the collection, but it was not until I saw and held the documents that I understood fully the scope of the project I had ahead

of me. Hall ushered Nancy and me upstairs into a storeroom of about twenty by thirty feet. Along one wall were a dozen or so cardboard filing boxes—the kind with the fancy string closures—that hold two feet of legal size folders. Opening up one of these boxes, I saw folder after folder of letters and newspaper clippings. I saw folder labels listing the 1948 Senate race in Texas between Coke Stevenson and Lyndon Johnson, the race that LBJ won by a few hundred votes and that earned him the nickname “Landslide Lyndon.” Other files held materials on the assassination of John F. Kennedy, and there was box after box of material on Ralph Yarborough. In one box we found letters signed by Kennedy, Johnson, Yarborough, and Sam Rayburn. I do not know Nancy’s initial reaction to this wealth of archival material, but I’m sure that the look on my face must have resembled that of a love-sick billy goat. The paper chaser in me was ecstatic but anxious: the Gulf Freeway never seemed quite so dangerous to me as it did on the drive back to Houston with our precious cargo. I could not wait to get the papers back to Rice where I knew they would be safe in the research center.

Once all of those two-foot boxes full of legal size folders were back at the research center, we had to study each folder’s contents. Then the crucial decision had to be made as to how to arrange the papers. How could we make it possible for researchers interested only in Ralph Yarborough to proceed directly to the material related to Yarborough without spending hours sorting through twenty-five feet of documents? I decided to divide the collection into seven topics—personal matters, the Democratic party, Ralph W. Yarborough, Lyndon B. Johnson, Sam Rayburn, Minnie Fisher Cunningham, and community service—and to arrange the material pertinent to each topic in chronological order. If someone needed information on LBJ in 1948, he would have all the material in the Hall papers on that topic in one locatable spot. Chronological order would allow the researcher to follow a sequence of events, such as an entire political campaign.

With the general outline of the collection decided, I had to examine each document within the hundreds of folders hauled from Dickinson. I divided the documents according to their topic and arranged them chronologically. Sometimes this process was difficult. Some letters concerned both Sam Rayburn and LBJ, for example. Should they be filed under Rayburn or Johnson? If the letter was important or interesting that problem was solved by making a duplicate. Duplication, however, added to the bulk of the collection which, in turn, added to the cost of storage. Duplication on a massive scale was, in addi-

tion, expensive. Usually a judgment call had to be made and a letter filed under one topic or the other. Each of these decisions took time, but they did enliven the mechanical process of sorting documents into seven neat stacks.

Part of the purpose of processing a collection is preserving it for future use. Paper, depending upon its quality and the environment in which it is housed, will disintegrate over time. As we sorted the letters and other documents we placed them in acid-free folders to inhibit decomposition. Newspapers, because of the poor quality of paper on which they are printed, decompose faster than ordinary paper. So we encapsulated the more important newspapers and newspaper clippings by sealing them between two pieces of clear plastic. The plastic is held together by double sided tape at the edges and by static electricity. Encapsulation is a slow and time-consuming business—one whose value has lately been questioned in the archival world—but it does have the advantage of being a simple process which allows the researcher to read the original newspapers instead of a microfilm copy of them. We then placed the legal size acid-free folders and the encapsulated newspapers in five-inch-wide acid-free boxes or, in the case of full-page newspapers, in oversized drawers. The acid-free boxes are then housed in a special climate-controlled area. Temperature and humidity control are necessary to ensure optimum shelf life of all archival material.

Before putting the boxes away we had to label each folder and each box. A note on the top of each folder lists what topic the folder is to be filed under, the date of the material inside the folder, and a brief description of the specific contents of the folder. The boxes are then numbered and labeled as part of the Hall papers. All of this might sound boring—and the process was at times boring—but it is not meaningless. The subject of each folder is now listed in a guide to the Hall papers which should make the use of the collection much easier.

Reading over the hundreds of documents in the Hall collection did have several positive results which overcame the repetitiveness and monotony that accompany processing a collection. Many of the letters were fascinating. Some spoke of a growing friendship between Hall and Ralph Yarborough. Others gave insight into the character of LBJ. Some of the most interesting letters were those between Hall and his sons while they were in college. The letters taught me much about Walter Hall as well as the political history of the United States and Texas. In terms of our goal of constructing a multi-dimensional collection, however, what was most important about reading over the letters month after

month was that the process prepared me to interview Hall and to record that interview on tape.

In July 1979, Chandler Davidson, Louis Marchiafava of the Houston Metropolitan Research Center, and I finally sat down with Walter Hall and turned on the tape recorders. We had some prepared questions and some topics we wanted to discuss. During most of the interview, however, Davidson, Marchiafava and I were content to let Hall talk while we occasionally interspersed questions. Hall spoke of his family background and of how highly he valued his education at Rice. He remembered many of his old professors fondly and made special mention of his admiration for Professor Radislav Tsanoff. Hall recounted his first venture into politics in the 1930s and talked of his difficulties in trying to support Franklin D. Roosevelt within the Texas Democratic party. The interviewers tried to focus on the reasons for his attachment to the Democratic party. Hall replied that it was the only party willing to experiment—to provide the benefits of capitalism to all Americans. We closed the interview with a discussion of Hall's business successes in the 1940s and 1950s and a summary of his involvement in politics up to 1948.

In the second interview, which took place in November, Hall discussed his involvement in the election campaigns of LBJ and Yarborough. Knowing both men well, he was able to compare their weaknesses and their strengths. One of the most interesting features of this interview was a lengthy discussion of the class structure in Texas and its role in politics. Hall contends that an upper class—what some people have labeled “the establishment”—has played a prominent and often decisive role in Texas politics. Many of the wealthy and socially prominent have asserted both subtle and overt pressure on their peers to force a near consensus among this class in favor of the conservative candidates in Texas. This consensus has in turn generated fantastic campaign war chests for the conservative candidates; and, in the days of mass media, money has meant votes. According to Hall, one of LBJ's great strengths in Texas politics was that, unlike Yarborough, he was able to appeal to this establishment in spite of being more liberal than its members might have liked.

The taped interviews, along with the numerous photographs in the collection, make the Hall papers a multi-dimensional collection. A researcher can hear and see Walter Hall as well as read his letters. To some our goal of adding material to an already massive collection of documents might seem like the pack rat impulse of the paper saver carried to new heights, but the additions have a value. A person is

more than the flat image reflected on the printed page, and often the sound of a person's voice on a tape or the tilt of his head in a photograph says as much as his written words.

With the interviews completed, one final task remained: the compilation of a guide or index to the Hall papers. Such a guide would allow a researcher to move exactly to a particular folder in a particular topical segment of the Hall papers instead of spending hours looking through the folder headings in the various boxes. At its heart, the whole business of processing a manuscript collection is making the retrieval of information faster and more efficient. Categorizing and ordering the documents before making them available to the researcher also ensures that Hall's records can be considered in their proper context. The processing can aid the accuracy of the conclusions the collection's user might draw from his studies. The guide to the Walter G. Hall papers contains a discussion of the scope and contents of the collection, a biographical sketch, and a description of the organization of the collection. Following this prefatory material is a lengthy list of the file box and folder topics. Those interested in a particular time frame or topic can examine the guide and move directly to the pertinent material. The guide, then, is the capstone of an organized manuscript collection.

I completed the guide by December 1. Almost a year had gone by since the collection first came into my hands, but I consider that year time well spent. The project satisfied what I think of as my inherited impulse to save the records of the past—to bundle them up in red ribbons for future use and to store them in a safe place. I was able to help make the collection a valuable tool for historical research, one which might give new insight into the character of the Democratic party in Texas and its often beleaguered liberals. More than that, however, the Hall papers gave me some insight into the characters of a fascinating group of individuals, not the least interesting of whom is Walter Hall himself—a man once described by one of his friends as someone “looking for meanings in the human drama.” Hall's interest in “the human drama” is, of course, what makes the record of this work valuable.

Archival work, too, is part of the search for meaning. Although often tedious, it has as its focus what the best histories and the greatest works of literature examine—the actions and motivations of individual people. An archivist satisfies his interest in the people around him by chasing down their written reflections, by saving their images, and by preserving their voices.

THE JULIAN SORELL HUXLEY PAPERS

Nancy Boothe Parker

Nancy Boothe Parker is director of the Woodson Research Center and a university associate of Brown College.

Through the great good will, energy, and generosity of friends John and Elly Heard and Hank and Demaris Hudspeth, and the Friends of Fondren Library, negotiations have just been completed whereby Rice will acquire a large body of the papers of the late Sir Julian Sorell Huxley (1887-1975). The collection, about fifty-five cubic feet in size and spanning three quarters of a century, includes manuscripts and typescripts of Huxley's published and unpublished works; diaries and travel notebooks; sketches, slides, and photographs; pamphlets, periodicals, reviews, and clippings; and over 25,000 pieces of correspondence.

Huxley was one of the most influential biologists of the twentieth century, and his contributions ranged over a wide field. His *Evolution: The Modern Synthesis* (1942) is still the starting point for neo-Darwinian evolutionary study—a work which integrates the antagonistic schools of Darwinian selectionists and Mendelian geneticists. In his work with other biologists, he made significant advances in fields as diverse as embryonic development and cancer research. Finally, the stress he placed on ecology in his field studies of animal behavior in natural habitats led to new understanding of instincts, territory occupation, ritualization, and sexual selection.

Huxley also concerned himself early on with the social context and ethical implications of science. His broad interests bridged the sciences and the humanities and spilled over into literature, the arts, philosophy and psychology, theology, politics, economics, and diplomacy. Because Huxley was a friend to a great many shapers of modern thought, the voluminous correspondence in the collection touches on many of the major controversies and issues of our age. Correspondents, in addition to members of his illustrious family, include scientists, authors, historians, artists, composers, philosophers, theologians, statesmen, publishers, and editors. For example, there are letters from such figures as T. S. Eliot, George Bernard Shaw, Albert Schweitzer, Margaret Mead, H. J. Muller, Stephen Spender, the Sitwells, Arnold Toynbee, H. G. Wells, Henry Moore, Benjamin Britten, John Maynard Keynes,

Claude Levi-Strauss, Bertrand Russell, Teilhard de Chardin, Anthony Eden, Dag Hammarskjöld, Margaret Sanger, and Felix Frankfurter. There is also a large section of correspondence generated during Huxley's tenure as the first director general of UNESCO. This very brief description gives just a hint of the immense breadth and multi-faceted research value of the papers.

Sir Julian's early connections with Rice emphasize the appropriateness of this institution as a permanent home for his papers. He was a member of President Edgar Odell Lovett's hand-picked first faculty at Rice's opening in 1912. Some of his papers and correspondence already reside in the university's archives and provide an interesting view of the first days of the Rice Institute. In a July 1918 article, "Texas and Academe," for *Cornhill Magazine*, Huxley describes the sight which greeted the participants in Rice's opening ceremonies. He writes first of the isolation of the campus, accessible by tram or by "rough and primitive" roads, which were "in wet winter weather actually impassable for all but [the] most adventurous motor-drivers." In the wilderness, however, visitors saw an "extraordinary spectacle":

The Administration Building was before us, looking exactly as if it had risen miraculously out of the earth.

All trace of scaffolding or building material was gone. Only a railway spur in the background gave a hint of ways and means.

The brown grass with trailing dewberry brambles reached to the very walls of the building, which rose, complete and magnificent, to face the setting sun. Pale granite and soft pinkish brick received a warmth from the rays: a series of slender white marble columns extended along the whole face of the building, rising from the level of the first storey, and supporting the white balustrade. . . . The high rounded windows, the lavishness of colour and decoration, conspired with the simple and modern form to produce an effect of something entirely original, something as new and real as a new species of Bird-of-Paradise lit on in a New Guinea jungle. Here it stood, brilliant, astounding, enduring: rising out of the barren brown prairie which extended, unbroken save for a belt of trees, to the horizon and far beyond the horizon.

As research associate and then as assistant professor of biology, Huxley occupied chambers in the tower of one of the men's residence halls (now Baker College) along with other young bachelor faculty members; there he entertained students at tea and wrote notes to President Lovett complaining politely about the unpalatable food and the servant problem.

Part of Huxley's responsibility at the new institute was to plan the biology laboratories and to staff the department, about which there is much Huxley-Lovett correspondence in the university archives. In the summer of 1914, Huxley returned to England looking for a lab assistant, and he selected Joseph Illot Davies, then studying at the University of London. Davies combined duties with studies at Rice and eventually earned his Ph.D. He became a full-fledged faculty member in 1929 and for many years was chairman of the biology department. Dr. Davies' memoirs, also in the research center, recount experiences he shared with Huxley during the two years they were together at Rice. One anecdote, illustrated by a glass photographic plate, concerns the

River Oaks pond. Davies and Huxley often roamed the countryside, Huxley looking for birds and Davies for ponds and streams. One day they came across a "permanent pond with clear water and aquatic plants with a rich aquatic fauna," located about 200 yards west of the present entrance to River Oaks. They noticed a man fishing in the pond, and, when they asked him what he was using for bait, he replied, "possums." Davies says that the reply "caused me to raise my eyebrows, and even Huxley must have raised his; at least he seemed incredulous." The possums turned out to be half-inch embryos the fisherman had taken from the pouch of the mother, which he had killed for food. "This was my first experience with Texas marsupials," writes Davies, "and a vivid one."

By the summer of 1916, Huxley felt compelled to return to England to fight in World War I. In a letter written aboard the S.S. *Comus* on June 20, 1916 (one of the seventy-odd letters from Huxley to Lovett in the archives), Huxley said: "I must confess that, when the train rolled out of the station . . . it was with somewhat of a queer sensation that I looked at



Sir Julian Sorell Huxley and his lab assistant, Joseph Illot Davies, at the River Oaks Pond, located about 200 yards west of the present entrance to River Oaks

the lights of Houston . . . I knew at that moment that the roots had struck deeper than I had imagined, and that I had the strongest desire to come back and carry out the work that I have so incompletely begun." It was at Rice, in addition, that Huxley considered himself to have come of age intellectually, and throughout his life he felt significant ties to the institution. In the spring of 1917, by which time Huxley had decided not to return to Rice, he wrote a letter of resignation to President Lovett:

Do not think . . . that I do this easily or without effort or misgivings. When I accepted your offer of a position at Rice Institute, I looked forward to 8 or 10 years in Texas; to setting my Department full on its feet; & seeing the Institute . . . settled down before I left. In spite of my constant feebleness of health, I enjoyed my life at Houston—& indeed often feel real pangs of "homesickness" for Texas & America. Now & again in London, with its restraint, its class-distinctions, its high pressure, its

fog, its artificiality, I see mentally the prairie & feel the soft winds from the Gulf. I remember the open warmheartedness & the freedom & easiness of the Texans,—& I miss it badly. Not only did I enjoy it, but I learnt from it—learnt a great deal—of the world at large, of human nature, of self-reliance, of tolerance, of breadth of view—& have a real sense of gratitude towards Rice & Texas & America.

Huxley retained a keen interest in student happenings at Rice, as evidenced in his long-time correspondence with Dr. George C. Wheeler (B.A., 1918). In November 1917, Huxley wrote to Wheeler (still an undergraduate), "I am . . . glad that Texas was duly humbled by Rice at football—that is a great achievement." From British Intelligence Headquarters on the Italian front in March 1918, he again wrote Wheeler for news from Houston: "Could you get hold of another copy of the account of how the Rice boys got back the owl from A&M? . . . [It] appeared in the *Thresher* . . . I lost my copy—& want to have that account." He asked, in the same letter, if someone could send him copies of the *Thresher* "in a bundle once every 3 or 4 weeks," so he could "keep touch with Rice—it becomes very shadowy sometimes, out here!"

In April 1919, Huxley, by now at Oxford, sent Dr. Lovett a silver Athenian drachma "with the original of the Rice owl on it," to be put, if Lovett deemed proper, in the "glass show-case in the Administration Building." And in 1923, Huxley sent Lovett a copy of one of his first books, *Essays of a Biologist*, which he had dedicated to his friends and colleagues at Rice. Three decades and many honors later, Huxley still felt drawn to Rice. In 1954, he wrote President William V. Houston that he was to be in California for a lecture that fall and that he would like very much to renew his contacts with Rice by coming here for a lecture, which he delivered on October 14, 1954.

Huxley died in 1975. His widow, aware of Sir Julian's ties with Rice, hoped that his papers could come here, where his academic career began. Her first overtures in this direction were made through poet Stephen Spender, a visiting professor at the University of Houston in 1977-1978. And now, after nearly two years of correspondence, discussion, negotiation, and actual viewing of the papers in London by two Rice faculty members, arrangements have finally been completed, and the Julian Huxley papers should be under our own roof by the new year. Sixty-two years ago Sir Julian expressed his "real sense of gratitude towards Rice & Texas & America." Now, as this superb collection finds a resting place here, the beneficiaries will be Rice and Texas—and even America.



Huxley on the campus of the Rice Institute where he worked for its first four years to organize the biology department

THE ORIGINS OF ASTRONOMY'S HALL OF FAME

Albert Van Helden

Albert Van Helden, associate professor of history specializing in the history of science, has been at Rice since 1970.

To mark the acquisition of the Fondren Library's millionth volume, donors gave symbolic volumes in letters, art, and science to the library. At the celebration, on April 22, 1979, Mr. David L. Rooke of Dow Chemical Company, U.S.A., presented the volume representing the sciences, Giambattista Riccioli's *Almagestum Novum*, published in Bologna in 1651. This work is an important addition to Fondren's collection in the history of science and will see much use in research in the history of astronomy.

Giambattista Riccioli was born in Ferrara in 1598. In 1614 he joined the Society of Jesus and received a thorough jesuit education in philosophy and theology. After finishing his studies, he taught rhetoric, philosophy, and theology, first at Parma and then at Bologna, where he died in 1671. In his spare time Riccioli pursued geography and astronomy and made important contributions in both areas.

Astronomy was a sensitive subject in seventeenth-century Italy. The initial reaction of the Catholic church to Nicholas Copernicus' epoch-making work *De Revolutionibus Orbium Coelestium* (1543) had been friendly enough. Copernicus was a loyal son of the church, and he had dedicated the book to Pope Paul III in the expectation that it would be received well. The calendar instituted by Julius Caesar, sixteen centuries earlier, was based on a year of 365¼ days. Since, however, the year is about 11 minutes shorter, the calendar had slipped, so that by 1543 the spring equinox came on March 11 instead of March 21. The lunar cycles used for computing the date of Easter had similarly slipped. The church was, therefore, vitally interested in calendar reform. But the reform of astronomy was generally seen as a prerequisite for the reform of the calendar, and since Copernicus' book was an attempt to reform astronomy, it was well received in Rome.

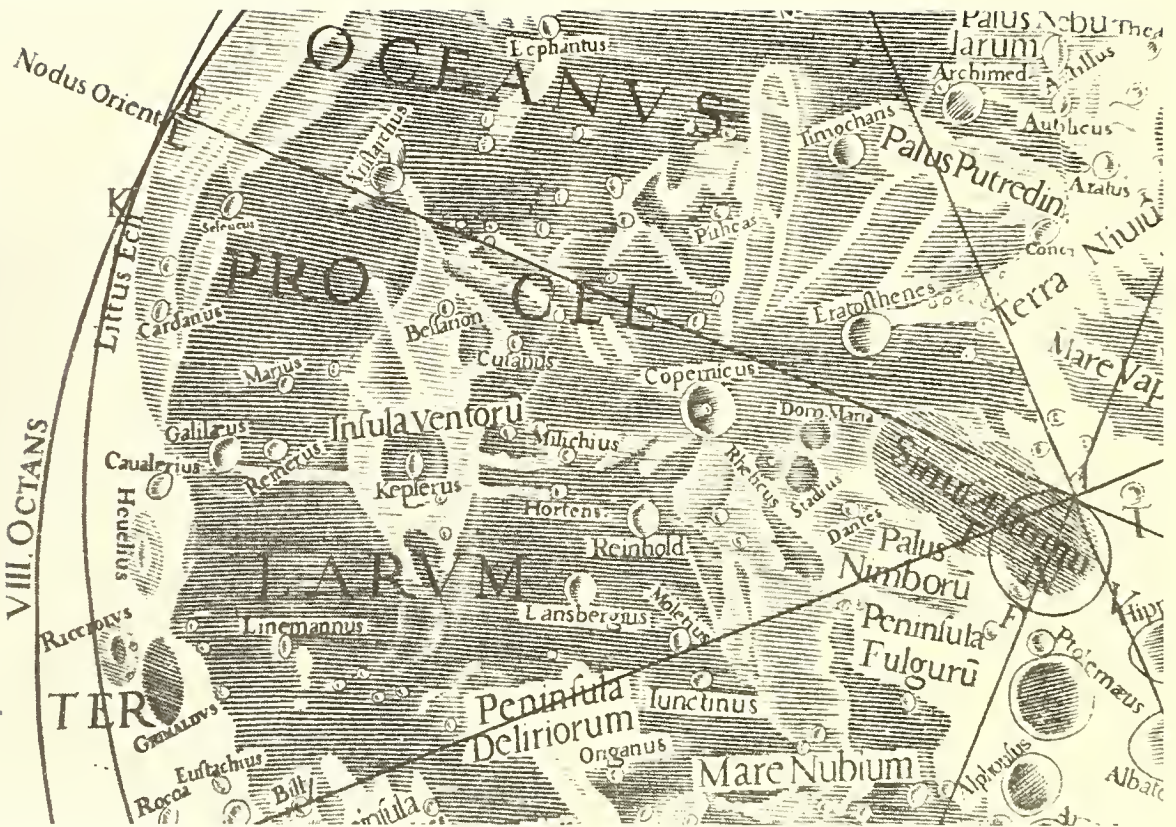
Once the calendar was put in order in 1582, however, the reform of astronomy did not stop; it gathered speed. While virtually all astronomers had used the Copernican theory as a mere mathematical hypothesis, by 1600 important voices were raised arguing that it represented the real structure of the

universe. But making the sun the center of the universe and putting the earth in the "third heaven" contradicted the established doctrine of the church. Purity of doctrine was becoming increasingly important in the climate of the Counter Reformation, and around 1600 the Catholic church became openly hostile to the Copernican theory.

When in 1610 Galileo published the first fruits of astronomical observations made with the telescope—an entirely new instrument—the world at large was drawn into the astronomical debate. Since Galileo now began openly to advocate the Copernican theory and did so increasingly in the vernacular with all his considerable literary talents, the issue came to a head. In 1616 the Holy Office declared the Copernican position that the sun is the center of the universe to be heretical as well as philosophically foolish and absurd. The Congregation of the Index suspended Copernicus' book subject to correction, and Galileo was enjoined from teaching the Copernican theory as more than a purely mathematical hypothesis. When it was later deemed that he had violated this order in his great *Dialogue Concerning the Two Chief Systems of the World* (1632), Galileo was made to abjure his Copernican convictions formally and was sentenced to house arrest for the rest of his life.

Riccioli's work in astronomy was done after the trial of Galileo and in the intellectual climate created by that trial. The problem was that regardless of whether one believed the earth or the sun to be the center of the universe, astronomy had changed. Even those who believed in the centrality and stability of the earth had been forced by the new discoveries made with the telescope to abandon the Ptolemaic system which had all the heavenly bodies move around the central earth: clearly, Venus and Mercury revolved about the sun. Orthodox, earth-centered astronomy was itself changing rapidly, and even the church agreed that in order to present young men entering the world of learning with a viable alternative to Copernicanism orthodox astronomers should do more than write diatribes against Galileo and his fellow Copernicans: they should write books in which earth-centered astronomy was shown to be an exciting, developing subject.

Riccioli was just the man for this task. He was a



A detail of the *Almagestum Novum*'s lunar map, showing the Copernicans abandoned in the Oceanus Procellarum, the Ocean of Storms. Note the crater Copernicus near the center, and the small crater Ricciolus near the edge. Why did Riccioli put himself with the Copernicans?

man of encyclopedic knowledge, and he had a tremendous capacity for work as well as considerable talents as a scientist. With full cooperation from his superiors, he set out to supply the Catholic world with a thoroughly modern, yet orthodox astronomy. His results were published in the *Almagestum Novum* of 1651 and *Astronomia Reformata* of 1665. The former is by far the more important work.

The title, *New Almagest*, clearly establishes Riccioli's intent. *Almagest** was the title under which Ptolemy's great *Mathematical Syntaxis* (ca. 150 A.D.), the basis for all astronomy until Copernicus, had become known in the West. Riccioli's work was to be

the new *Almagest*, the updated basis for earth-centered astronomy. And the reader was not entirely disappointed. The *Almagestum Novum* was a review of all of astronomy, from before Ptolemy right up to 1650. It is an immense treasure of Greek, Muslim, medieval Latin, and contemporary astronomical facts, theories, and bibliography. It is this aspect which makes it the single most convenient reference work for the history of astronomy before 1650.

Although Riccioli's avowed purpose was to combat the Copernican heresy, the *Almagestum Novum* is not particularly polemical. True, Riccioli cites forty-nine arguments for the Copernican hypothesis and seventy-seven against it, and he publishes the full text of Galileo's condemnation and abjuration: but when it comes to actual astronomical matters he is well-informed and very fair, giving the Copernicans due credit for all their contributions.

Riccioli not only reviewed all of astronomy, but also observed, measured, and experimented. In

*The original title was *Mathematike Syntaxis*, or "mathematical (that is astronomical) compilation." In later antiquity it became known informally as *Megale Syntaxis* or *Megiste Syntaxis*, that is "great (or greatest) compilation." The translators into Arabic rendered *megiste* as *al-majisti*. From this it became *Almagestum* when the work was translated from Arabic into Latin in the Middle Ages.

evaluating Galileo's notions about pendulums and falling bodies, he rose to great experimental heights. The determination of the exact length of a pendulum with a period of one second presented great problems at that time. Riccioli enlisted the help of his Jesuit colleagues in counting the number of swings over an entire day. On the first try they counted 87,998 oscillations: a "second's pendulum" should produce 86,400 oscillations per day. Progressive small adjustments of the length of the pendulum brought him not much closer. His best effort was 86,999 oscillations, after which his colleagues refused further cooperation in this tedious work.

In order to check whether or not falling bodies behave as Galileo had claimed they did, Riccioli needed an accurate clock. But no instruments of such accuracy were available at the time. He used a pendulum with a length of only 1.15 seconds and a period of a sixth of a second to train two of his colleagues "gifted not only for physics but also for music" to count so that each number corresponded to an oscillation of the pendulum. Their counting then measured the time of descent of falling bodies. Not only was Riccioli able, by this means, to verify Galileo's law of the proportionality between distance and time-squared for falling bodies, but he also arrived at an excellent value for the acceleration due to gravity, 30 ft/sec². This value was much better than the estimates of others (including Galileo's) and was only improved upon twenty years later when Christiaan Huygens found the law relating the length and period of a pendulum to the acceleration due to gravity.

Riccioli's lasting contribution to astronomy was a rather curious one. The telescope had revealed the moon's surface to be uneven, despite Aristotle's edict that heavenly bodies are perfectly spherical and smooth. Progressives and conservatives had quickly agreed that this roughness was indeed a feature of the moon and not a deception of the new instrument. For various reasons astronomers deemed it necessary to map the lunar surface, and thus the science of selenography was born in the 1630s. When Riccioli began making observations of the heavens in earnest, several moonmaps had already been published. But they were of varying quality. Under his direction, his colleague Francesco Maria Grimaldi (better known for his discovery of the diffraction of light) prepared a new moonmap. But what was needed also was a consistent system of nomenclature.

Riccioli examined the alternatives. The cosmographer of the King of Spain had named all the important features after members of the Spanish royal family, and the Polish astronomer Johannes

Hevelius had assigned names of earthly features to lunar ones which resembled them vaguely. There was a Mediterranean, an island of Sicily, and even a Mount Etna on the moon. Riccioli rejected both systems. Instead, he named the lunar "seas" after the various meteorological influences the moon was believed to have on the earth, e.g., "Ocean of Storms" and "Sea of Tranquility." For the features we now call craters, he chose the names of famous astronomers and philosophers, although with an important caveat: "*Nec Homines Lunam incolunt. Nec Animae in Lunam migrant,*" that is, "Men do not inhabit the moon, and neither do souls migrate there."

In assigning the names of astronomers to craters, Riccioli was scrupulously fair. He grouped them by historical epoch and schools. Although Copernicus and his followers were cast into the Ocean of Storms "like floating islands on account of the instability of the earth asserted by them," their importance was fairly reflected by the prominence of the craters to which he assigned their names (see detail of map, page 10). The crater Copernicus is, after all, one of the most prominent features on the moon.

Although the frontispiece of the *Almagestum Novum* clearly indicates the author's position in the "Great Debate" between geocentric and heliocentric astronomers (see page 12), the book was such a treasure of astronomy that several generations of astronomers were brought up on it. In northwest Europe where the Copernican theory had become accepted by about 1650, astronomers such as Christiaan Huygens (the discoverer of Saturn's rings), John Flamsteed (England's first Astronomer Royal), and Christopher Wren (a professor of astronomy until 1674) brought themselves to the research front of astronomy by studying Riccioli's work. Here they found the opinions of all the great astronomers discussed and weighed fairly and the burning issues in astronomy presented in an evenhanded manner.

Riccioli's fairness has led a number of writers to speculate that he was a "closet" Copernican, unable to express his personal opinion on this matter in the religious climate of Italy. That is an error. Riccioli was simply a very good astronomer: why couldn't an astronomer who believed in a central and stable earth make important contributions to his subject?

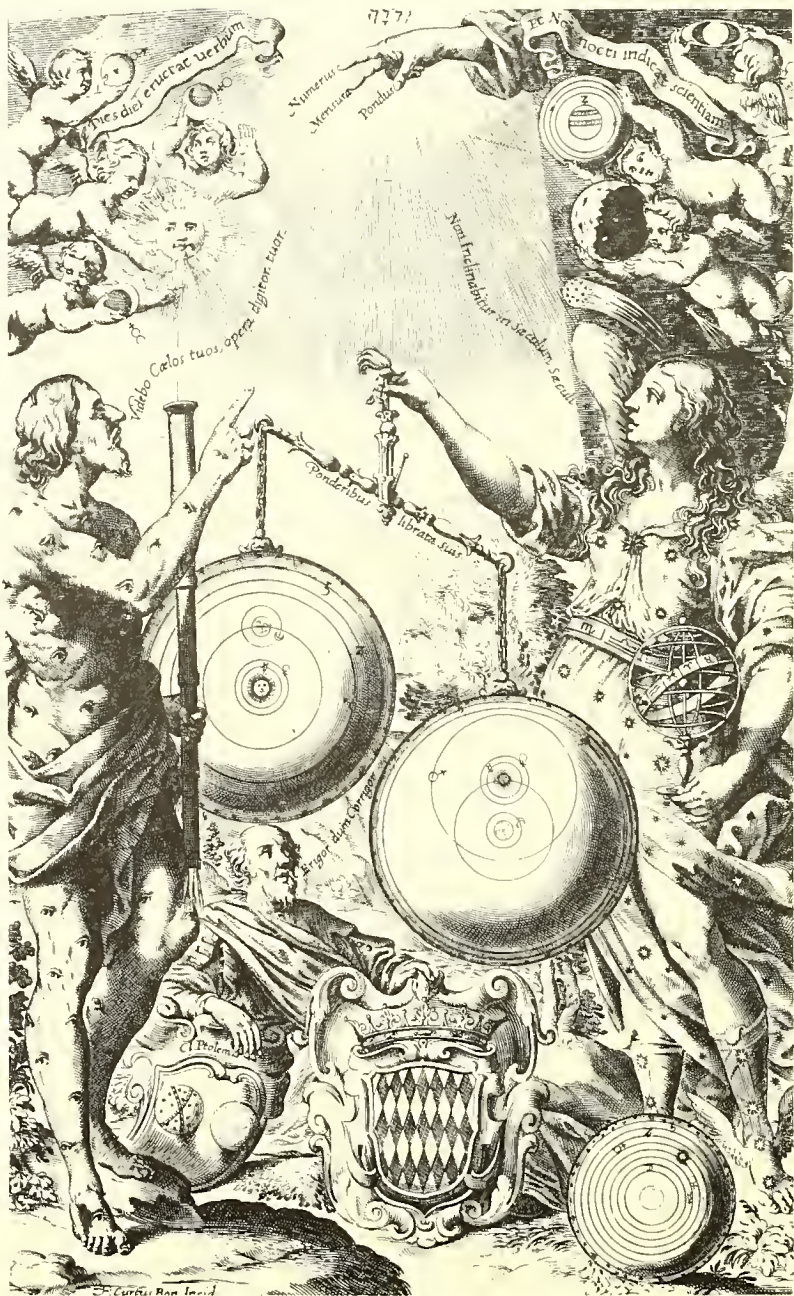
Because of its encyclopedic nature, the *Almagestum Novum* remained a standard reference work even when new research had made it obsolete as a source for astronomical research. Slowly Riccioli's system of lunar nomenclature came to be preferred over Hevelius' more confusing system. By the middle of the eighteenth century his system had been accepted by all the important astronomers. By naming lunar

craters after his predecessors and colleagues, he gave astronomy an official "Hall of Fame." No doubt, many practitioners liked the system because it meant that they, too, might someday have their names immortalized on lunar maps. Riccioli had assigned a modest crater near the moon's limb to himself, thereby immortalizing himself even after astronomers had forgotten him.

As the *Almagestum Novum* lost its importance as a working tool of astronomers, it became a crucial tool for historians of astronomy. At present it is the

single most important reference source for the history of Renaissance astronomy. It has been mined by historians, often without citations. It is, therefore, also important for the historiography of astronomy: the approach to and coverage of certain episodes by historians of astronomy become intelligible when one examines the appropriate passages in Riccioli's *Almagestum Novum*. By its generous gift the Dow Chemical Company has strengthened research in the history of astronomy at Rice enormously.

Frontispiece of the *Almagestum Novum*. On the right is Astraea, goddess of justice who withdrew into the heavens as the wickedness of men increased. On her scales she weighs the systems of Copernicus and Riccioli. The system of Copernicus (left) is found light in the balance. She quotes Psalm 104: "[The foundations of the earth] should not be removed forever." On the left is the hundred-eyed Argus, the all-seeing. He is here represented as an astronomer (he holds a telescope) in search of divine truth. Argus quotes Psalm 8: "When I consider thy heavens, the work of thy fingers . . ." Ptolemy and his system lie at the bottom of the page. His system is discarded, but he is still honored. He says: "I am extolled and at the same time improved." Astraea and Argus both look toward God's creating hand, shown at the top of the picture pointing to the three attributes of the universe: number, measure, and weight. The banners reproduce a verse from Psalm 19: "Day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night sheweth knowledge."



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